

Editorial Department.

WE learn that an attempt is to be made to secure legislative consent to the appointment of a Pathologist to the asylums for the insane in the State of Illinois. We also learn that our esteemed contributor, Dr. H. D. Schmidt, of New Orleans, is an applicant for the position, if created.

While we have grave doubts, under existing circumstances, of the utility and expediency of making such an appointment by law, as is proposed, we feel bound to say, that if the office is created and can be filled by Dr. Schmidt, his appointment would do about as much as could be done in that way toward reconciling us to the proposed step on the part of the State. There is no man in this country better fitted, by honest, practical labor in the microscopy of the nervous system, to fill such a position than is Dr. Schmidt.

To make such an office really of value, it is required, first, that critical clinical histories of the cases should be made by those who are well versed in the recent anatomy and physiology of the nervous system, as well as with the vexed questions in the physiology and pathology of the nervous system, disputed points in diagnosis, and the characteristics of clinical groups and species. From such a stand-point and with reasonable thoroughness in the use of modern methods of research, the *ante-mortem* histories should be made of such cases as are to be brought to an autopsy. Then, on the supposition that the gross *post-mortem* examination has been carefully made, the microscopic examinations of the nervous tissues must be made by a candid, cautious, thoroughly experienced observer, not only practiced in microscopic technique, but familiar with the appearances of healthy nerve tissue, and with morbid appearances under the microscope, otherwise the observation of the microscopic pathologist will be either useless or worse than useless—misleading. But in the appointment of Dr.

Schmidt the office could be made a useful one, so far as the minute anatomy of the nervous tissues is concerned, since he appears to have about every requisite for filling such a position with profit. Everything will depend on the man who fills the office.

WITH the present issue commences the sixth volume of this journal; the fourth under its present title of the *JOURNAL OF NERVOUS AND MENTAL DISEASE*. The five years of its existence have been perhaps the most trying period of financial stress in the history of our country, and the fact that the *JOURNAL* has survived them is the best promise for its future continuance during the better period of which we trust we are at the threshold.

It was commenced to meet what was felt to be a want of the profession in this country, to establish a scientific medical periodical which should give to its readers a summary of the best results of investigation in the not narrow specialty of neurology from all parts of the world, and which should afford a medium for the publication of original work in this line in our own country. It was not expected that this latter would be its principal function, and for several years selections and translations filled a large portion of the first department of the *JOURNAL*. And though we now have no lack of high class original matter, we shall yet retain a place for translations of articles that may be of special or exceptional importance or merit, and not generally within the reach of the profession in this country. We are thankful to be able to say, however, that we have the prospects of making the first department of our journal more valuable and interesting than in any preceding period.

The second department, that of reviews, will be sustained as heretofore, but we shall have additional facilities and abler assistance not previously at our command. Dr. Meredith Clymer, of New York, it is hoped, will take special charge of the literature of insanity. As has been our previous custom, all articles in this department not written by the editors will be over the names or the recognizable initials of their authors.

The editorial department will be continued as affording a place for the discussion of general questions and such subjects as do not find their place elsewhere in the JOURNAL.

The Periscope will be kept up as hitherto, and it is intended that it shall, more fully than before, reflect the progress of neurological science. In it we shall hereafter give full abstracts and even complete translations of many important articles in foreign medical literature that are of interest to our readers.

As to any future plans of the JOURNAL, we have no changes to propose or new promises to make at present. But we will earnestly consider before the issue of another volume, whether some change in time of issue, and of make-up in other respects, will not render it more useful to the profession, and better suited to its needs.

Our readers are doubtless all aware of the fact that Dr. Brown-Sequard now fills the chair in the *Collège de France*, made vacant by the death of Claude Bernard. On the second of December last he gave the opening lecture of his first course in his new position, and in which he laid down his programme for the year. It will perhaps not be a matter for surprise to many to know that it is to be devoted to directly combating almost every doctrine at present held in regard to the physiology of the brain, with especial reference, as might have been expected, to cerebral localizations. From the statements made in his opening lecture, it does not appear that his course is to be largely experimental, but chiefly based on a consideration of such facts as he has already collected, and which he has, at least in part, referred to in his lectures in this country, Great Britain and France, the past few years, and with which our readers are to some extent already familiar. We shall watch with some interest his course, but have very moderate expectations that it will be the means of establishing on a firm basis his peculiar doctrines, though his present position will give him the opportunity and the means for developing and placing them in their best light.

It is generally known to the medical profession and those interested in bibliography that Dr. John S. Billings, surgeon U. S. A., in charge of the National Medical Library at Washington, is now ready to print his great "National Catalogue of Medical Literature," as soon as Congress grants an appropriation for the purpose. This indexes under subjects, and by authors, books, pamphlets and original papers in nearly all the medical periodicals of the world; including over 400,000 subject entries, and making ten volumes royal 8vo of 1,000 pages each. This will be of the greatest value to physicians the world over, as it enables them to find analogues for peculiar and difficult cases, and thus often to save lives. In continuation of this work, it is now proposed to publish monthly, under the editorship of Dr. Billings and of his assistant, Dr. Robert Fletcher, M. R. C. S., a current medical bibliography under the title of the *Index Medicus*. It will be issued by F. Leypoldt, the bibliographic publisher, 37 Park Row, New York, at \$3 per year, and will enter all medical books and index the leading medical journals and transactions in English and other languages. A full list of the latter, numbering over 600, will form a part of the specimen number of the *Index*, soon to be issued.

Owing to the necessity of suppressing an article, at the author's instance, just as we were going to press, this issue is not as large as we expected it to be, by several pages. In amends we shall try to have the space more than made up in the succeeding issues.

In this issue will be found the title page of the last volume, which was left out in the October number.
